



## Newsletter June 2026

### *From the desk of the Chairman*

I would like to begin by recognizing the exceptional turnout at ARSAG 2026 in Orlando, Florida. With nearly 400 attendees representing 17 nations, this marked our strongest attendance since before the COVID era.

General Randall Reed, Commander of USTRANSCOM, opened the conference by reinforcing the motto, “Together, We Deliver,” and highlighting the breadth of missions TRANSCOM executes each day across the air, land, and maritime domains. He also emphasized ARSAG’s importance to international interoperability and the continued imperative to modernize aerial refueling capabilities.

The week also featured an outstanding roster of keynote and guest speakers, including Lt Gen Rebecca Sonkiss, interim Commander, AMC; General Carlton D. Everhart, USAF, Ret; SES Roberto Guerrero, SAF/IEN; Thomas H. Jones, President, Northrop Grumman Aeronautics Systems; Frederico Lemos, CCO, Embraer; Tom O’Leary, CEO and co-founder, JetZero; James “Jake” Jacobson, USAF, Ret; Lt Gen Antoine Noguier, Ret, Head of Strategy, Airbus; and Lt Col Mark Hasara, USAF, Ret.



**John B. Sams, Jr., Lieutenant General USAF, Ret.**  
ARSAG Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

The program was further strengthened by nearly 50 additional speakers participating across more than 10 panels, addressing a broad range of critical topics. These included U.S. and International Military Status updates, Operations, System Design, Interoperability, Test and Evaluation, Advanced Concepts, Safety, Reliability and Maintainability, Training, and Industry Studies and Analysis. ARSAG 2026 also introduced a new Cyber Security Panel, underscoring the evolving requirements of airmen around the world.

The awards program was headlined by the ARSAG Founder’s Award, being given to Col Gomer Custer, USAF, Ret, in recognition of his distinguished 26 years of service as ARSAG Secretary. Exceptional Service to ARSAG awards were presented to Kathleen Kyle, USAF; Laurent Beyneix, French MoD; Col Slim Morgan, USAF, Ret and President, Metrea Strategic Mobility; and Dave Drewitt, Thales. Exceptional Service to Aerial Refueling awards were presented to Operation Midnight Hammer, the Multinational MRTT Unit, the Atlantic Eagles Mission, and Lt Col Gian Luca D’Angelo, Italian Air Force.

On behalf of ARSAG, I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to this year’s sponsors and exhibitors. Your support was instrumental in making ARSAG 2026 such a resounding success. We look forward to building on this momentum at ARSAG 2027 in Reno, Nevada, on 13–15 April. Until next time, I wish you all a wonderful summer.

# Seen at ARSAG 2026



## ***News from Airbus Defence and Space***

### **Airbus, Singapore achieve world-first on A330 MRTT auto-refuelling full certification**

Singapore, 4 February 2026 — Airbus and Singapore have achieved full certification of the Automatic Air-to-Air Refuelling (A3R) capability on the Airbus A330 Multi Role Tanker Transport (MRTT). The Certification was granted by the Spanish National Institute for Aerospace Technology (INTA) following an extensive qualification and flight-test campaign conducted in close collaboration with the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) and the Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA).

This represents a key milestone in the continued development of the A330 MRTT platform and marks a world-first in aviation, with the campaign confirming the A3R system's maturity, safety, and reliability across a wide range of mission profiles. With this certification, the RSAF becomes the first air force globally to introduce A3R on its fleet of A330 MRTTs, operated by 112 Squadron, setting a new benchmark for automated refuelling.

Mike Schoellhorn, Chief Executive Officer at Airbus Defence and Space said: "The certification of A3R with Singapore is a significant achievement and a clear demonstration of what long-term partnership can deliver. Singapore has consistently led the adoption and co-development of next-generation aerospace technologies, and Airbus is proud to support the RSAF and DSTA in fielding a capability that will shape the future of air-to-air refuelling."

Ng Chad-son, Chief Executive, Defence Science and Technology Agency, said: "Achieving full certification of A3R is a significant achievement as Singapore's A330 MRTTs can now perform automatic refuelling both in daytime and at night. DSTA worked very closely with the RSAF and Airbus to advance innovation, enhance safety and reduce crew workload. This attainment showcases effective technology integration and sets a new benchmark on automatic aerial refuelling globally."

Major-General Kelvin Fan, Chief of Air Force at Republic of Singapore Air Force said: "The RSAF is pleased to have partnered with DSTA and Airbus in pioneering the world's first A3R capability. This development will enhance the RSAF's aerial refuelling operations, contributing to greater operational effectiveness. It also reflects the RSAF's commitment to working with industry partners to innovate and remain at the leading edge of technology."

The joint effort between Airbus, RSAF and DSTA began in 2020 to validate and accelerate entry into service of the A3R system. The certification programme encompassed day and night missions, expanded flight envelopes, and multiple receiver aircraft types, ensuring full mission readiness. The flight trials took place both in Spain and Singapore, with the RSAF providing the A330 MRTTs, as well as F16s and F15s, as receivers to support the testing and validations.

Developed by Airbus as part of its SMART MRTT vision, the A3R system employs advanced automation and computer vision technologies to automatically detect, track, and engage receiver aircraft, without the need for manual input. By reducing operator workload and enhancing precision, A3R improves mission safety, and delivers greater operational flexibility for air forces operating the A330 MRTT.



## ***News from The Boeing Company***

### **MQ-25A Stingray™: A Major Milestone Since We Last Met**

Since our last gathering at the ARSAG Annual Symposium, the first U.S. Navy MQ-25A Stingray™ has achieved an incredible milestone: it has successfully completed its first test flight. The achievement marks a significant step forward for the Navy's first operational carrier-based unmanned aircraft and brings the program closer to safely integrating the Stingray into the carrier air wing.

MQ-25A represents a new approach to carrier-based aerial refueling. Designed to take over the buddy-tanker mission now performed by F/A-18 Super Hornets, the Stingray will allow strike fighters to return to their primary roles while adding dedicated refueling capacity to the carrier air wing.

During its first flight, the Stingray autonomously taxied, took off, flew, landed, and responded to commands from Air Vehicle Pilots in the Unmanned Carrier Aviation Mission Control System MD-5 Ground Control Station. That demonstration validated key elements of the aircraft's autonomous flight control, navigation, and ground control integration — all critical steps on the road to carrier qualification.

MQ-25A is built to extend the reach and persistence of the carrier air wing. The Stingray will help refuel aircraft farther from the carrier and deepen the Navy's ability to operate in contested environments.



Just as important, MQ-25A is more than a tanker. It is the Navy's entry point into routine manned-unmanned teaming from the carrier deck, with future growth potential for additional mission sets if required.

Since we last met, the program has made clear progress — and the first flight of MQ-25A is a major proof point. For the fleet, it signals that autonomous refueling is moving from concept to operational reality.



# ARSAG INTERNATIONAL

## Calendar of Events

**2026**

**2027**

ARSAG Workshop /  
Joint Standardization Board (JSB)

**15 - 17 September**

Dayton, Ohio (Fairborn)  
DoubleTree by Hilton

ARSAG Workshop /  
Joint Standardization Board (JSB) &  
Panel Chairs / Steering Group  
Planning Meeting

**2 – 4 February**

Dayton, Ohio (Fairborn)  
DoubleTree by Hilton

Visit our website at  
[www.arsaginc.com](http://www.arsaginc.com)  
for all the latest updates

**ARSAG 2027**

**13 - 15 April**

Reno, Nevada  
Silver Legacy Hotel



*Proudly supporting the aerial refueling community since 1978*